

however, without an alternation between days of recreation and rest and days of work. This was largely because of the standard festivals of the Chinese year, which, in spite of some modifications and additions made in the past few years by the coming of the West, still persist.

The most important has been and in the vast majority of localities still is the New Year. This event does not fall regularly on the same days of the Gregorian calendar, for the older Chinese measurement of time has been both by the lunar month and the solar year, and to make the two somewhat nearly coincide—since the lunar year of twelve months is only 354 days—some years are regarded as made up of twelve months and to others an additional or intercalary month is added. The date does not fall earlier than January 21st or later than February 19th. A few days before the New Year the Kitchen God is supposed to return to heaven to report the conduct of the members of the family since the last anniversary. This is signaled by burning the image of the god, perhaps after smearing his lips with molasses—to insure that the deity carries with him a final good impression of the household. On the last day of the old year he is welcomed back and a fresh picture of him is pasted above the kitchen stove. The New Year has been the time for the settlement of debts, and it has been considered bad form to enter it without having paid them. The day itself and the several following ones are devoted to feasting and visiting, and all but the most necessary labor ceases. Honors are paid to ancestors and there are family reunions. When old customs are followed, children make their obeisances to their parents, pupils pay their respects to their teachers, and friends call on

one another and exchange good wishes. With the anniversary, another year is added to the reckoning of the ages of all members of the family. While birthdays are observed, according to Chinese reckoning a child is one year old at its birth and two years of age after it passes into its first New Year. Thus an infant born in the last month of the year is in the succeeding month said to be two years old.

For the very poor and, perhaps, the majority of the population the New Year's celebration lasts but three or four days. Theoretically, however, and practically for many the period is regarded as ending on the fifteenth day of the first month with the Feast of